DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 409 388 UD 031 778

AUTHOR	Martinez, Michele
TITLE	Urbanization in the Northwest. Issues and Implications for Policy.
INSTITUTION	Northwest Regional Educational Lab., Portland, Oreg.
PUB DATE	Dec 96
NOTE	14p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Cultural Differences; Demography; Educational Change; Educational Finance; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Financial Support; Multicultural Education; Policy Formation; Resource Allocation; School Safety; *Social Change; Urban Problems; *Urbanization
IDENTIFIERS	*United States (Northwest)

ABSTRACT

In the Northwest, as across the rest of the United States, the basic characteristics of the U.S. household are changing. In demographic and economic terms, the Northwest is at the forefront of changes predicted for the entire country in the coming century. Urbanization is occurring in a region that was once defined by the relationship of human society with nature. To set policy for the region's increasingly urbanized educational institutions, it is necessary to focus on the changes now occurring in the region's high growth communities. Economic forecasts and demographic predictions signal a need to reassess existing school funding policies. Given a shrinking tax base, the onus for reinventing educational programs often fall on educational institutions. Coupled with community reluctance to recognize and respond to the new diversity of the Northwestern population, the schools may face problems related to public dissociation from the schools. Creating a school culture in which all may participate may be Northwest educators' most demanding task. The social complexities of increased population density, such as violence, are beginning to have an impact in the Northwest. Policymakers will need to find a way to capitalize on diversity, promote safe and civil learning environments, and provide for 21st century learners through multicultural approaches and educational technology. (Contains 26 references.) (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 409 388

URBANIZATION IN THE NORTHWEST

Issues And Implications For Policy

Michele Martínez

December 1996

Planning and Service Coordination Unit
Dr. Rex Hagans, director

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jerry D. Kirkpatrick
NREL

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

UD031778

INTRODUCTION

In 1990, the U.S. Bureau of the Census began to release figures from the new survey of American households. From the 1990 census data, demographers are able to project a picture of America in the next millennium. In the coming century, an increasingly youthful population will place unprecedented demands on the nation's educational system. (Estrada, 1993).

In the Northwest, as across the nation, the basic characteristics of the American household are changing. As a high-growth region, the effects of nationally projected demographic shifts became apparent as early as the 1980s. In the past decade the Pacific Northwest has experienced tremendous population surges that often accompany economic growth.

In demographic and economic terms, the Northwest is at the forefront of changes predicted for the entire nation in the coming century. As the region grows, the character of the Northwest household is changing. Over the coming decades, demographer Leo Estrada predicts "significant changes in the fabric and texture of the nation." The average home will have fewer occupants and more bread winners. Fewer families will own homes or contribute to systems supported by property tax. Children will enter schools with a greater variety of backgrounds and educational needs. In economic and human terms, the relationship between the school and the household will continue to change (Estrada, 1993).

As the 21st century approaches, Northwest educators are faced with an accelerated version of national trends that point to greater diversity, economic transformation and the formulation of new ties between changing households and the schools. Urbanization is occurring in a region whose character was once defined by the relationship of human society with nature.

Urbanization of the Northwest

For some, the terms "urban" and Northwest evoke contradictory images. Known for its natural beauty and built upon an agrarian economic base, the label "urban" is incongruent with the historical character of the region. Industrial growth and its accompanying social changes are a fairly recent phenomena in the Northwest and have manifested themselves in unique patterns (Artibise, et. al, 1996). The effects of urbanization can be observed in varying degrees, throughout the region.

Between 1990 and 1995, the region experienced 11.4 percent growth, twice the national rate. This growth has been concentrated around the urban centers which are served by larger school districts. In 1996, 70 percent of the region's districts served fewer than 1,000 students. However, these smaller districts served only 10 percent of the Northwest's total student population. Large districts (those with more than 7,500 students) constituted only 5 percent of the region's total districts. Yet, the large districts serve 49 percent of the Northwest's students (Barnett & Braunger, 1996). In 1996, a majority of the region's students attended larger, densely populated schools.

In order to set policy for the Northwest's increasingly urbanized educational institutions, it is first necessary to focus on the nature of the transformations taking place within the region's high growth communities.

Economics and the New Household

The changing household and the schools. Educational institutions are a primary contact point for members of the household and larger institutions. If, as demographers predict, the character of the Northwest household is changing, it is the school which will first be affected by this change. Educators will be among the first to negotiate relationships between the new household and the community.

According to the U.S. Bank's *Barometer*, a report on the Northwest economy in 1995-1996, both national and regional economy is on an upturn. While economic growth can translate to strong support for schools, traditional tax-based supports for education may be challenged as the nation's baby boomers reach retirement age. To what degree will a new generation of retirees accept the burden for educating the nation's young? The nation as a whole may have to reevaluate school support mechanisms and examine its educational priorities.

A new urban geography. Once solidly middle class communities are witnessing population increases at both ends of the economic scale. Pockets of poverty exist alongside growing enclaves of affluence. Agricultural areas attract seasonal workers. In edge communities, those newer population centers that reside near urban centers, new employment, from the strip-mall job to the computer technician position, have drawn new residents. As may be expected, the children of the region's new labor force represent very different populations in terms of income level, parent education, and children's readiness to learn.

Telecommuting is another growing phenomenon in the Northwest. In communities from Bend, Oregon, to Anchorage, Alaska, telecommuters enjoy the luxury of conducting business in major urban centers, while living in remote, natural settings. Telecommuters are not linked to the social and economic life of communities as were traditional workers. The degree to which telecommuting families support local public schools remains to be seen.

Shrinking tax base. Economic forecasts and demographic predications signal a need to reassess existing school funding policies. While state governments have a variety of funding options open to them, the region's schools have traditionally relied upon the support of property, income or natural excise tax bases. In the future, fewer Northwest families are likely to own property. The children of urban and edge community renters will continue to enter public schools. Fluctuations in natural resource revenues and a growing public dissatisfaction with current tax structures will present further challenges (Burnett & Braunger, 1996).

Given this shrinking tax base, the onus for reinventing educational programs often falls on the educational institutions. Policymakers at all levels are studying alternative funding and budget restructuring as possible solutions. Community collaboration may also assist schools in realizing reform goals within a constrained fiscal environment.

"What Have Become of the Good Old Days?": Public Views of Changing Schools

Essayist Michael Eric Dyson's phrase, "We never were what we used to be," sums up a nostalgia which, pervades African American communities in the 1990s (Dyson, 1996). Longings for a rosy past, when relations between people seemed more decent and problems less complex, are not exclusive to Dyson's community. Perhaps a response to societal change, nostalgic sentiments and their accompanying political agendas are on the rise both nationally and in the Northwest. While some express longing for the simplicity of an agrarian past, others reflect more negative sentiments of isolationism and exclusion.

Northwest educators express particular concerns with community expressions of resistance to change. Denial, is the term used by one Northwest superintendent, to describe the response of some citizens to a newly diverse school population. Though a particular interest group may not be representative of the population of the district, the squeaky wheel syndrome occurs: a very vocal minority can advance a very narrow agenda in the educational arena. Consequently, retrenching, isolationist movements can carry more than their due weight in the PTA meeting or before the school board.

With the exception of some vocal factions, the general trend is toward public dissociation from the schools. Popular debate on the advantages of private schools, vouchers, and charter schools reflect waning confidence in the effectiveness of public schools. Declining support for public schools may reflect a societal pessimism with regard to public institutions in general. Despite growing dissatisfaction in public schools, many Northwest educators continue to affirm the importance of the common school experience with the conviction that children who learn democratic principles in the classroom are better equipped to be full participants in their nation's future.

A New Diversity in the Region

Migration and immigration have transformed the face and language of the Northwest household. Earlier decades saw waves of immigration from Canada, Great Britain and Europe. Since 1980, the majority of immigration to the U.S. has been from Mexico, other Latin American countries, and Asian countries (Estrada, 1993). Positioned on the Pacific Rim, the Northwest is a gateway for commerce and migration. With changing economies come new workers, from the agricultural laborer to the highly skilled technician. Newcomers to the Northwest from Latin America and Asia, as well as California and other states, ride the currents of global economies. The children of the Northwest's new work force join earlier arrivals to create increasingly diverse student populations.

Language diversity. The Northwest's earliest inhabitants carried on commerce in a variety of Native languages. In the 1990s home languages of the Northwest's children include Hmong, Thai, Tagalog, Russian, Spanish, Yurok, Tlingit, Mandarin, Cantonese and many more. In cases where immigrant children arrive with limited schooling experience, instruction in English becomes a great challenge. Language issues will increasingly impact Northwest schools as the region further develops global economic ties.

Ethnicity and the schools. National census figures indicate a differential growth in minority populations, as compared to overall trends. While overall growth stabilizes, the numbers of minority youth entering schools will increase. The educational demands required by this growing minority population will continue to challenge educators (Estrada,1993).

Regionally, the ratio of minority students is lower than the national average (a little less than two of five students in 1992). However, minority enrollment is increasing at a faster rate than nonminority enrollment. The result is a rapid shift in the ratio of minority to nonminority students in schools.

While rural Native Americans, Hispanics, and other non urban populations account for a part of the region's diversity, ethnic minorities tend to be most concentrated in the Northwest's cities and edge communities. The average minority enrollment in the region's five central city districts (Seattle, Portland, Anchorage, Spokane, and Tacoma) is now at 40 percent (Barnett & Braunger, 1996).

From Diversity as Deficit to Funds of Knowledge

In the coming century, creating a common language of learning, a school culture in which all may participate, may be Northwest educators' most demanding task. Once, a sink or swim approach was our answer to difference. Children with different backgrounds and needs were expected to become part of a mainstream experience, or be left out in the cold.

Today, difference is becoming the rule, rather than the exception. Groups once termed "minorities" may soon occupy a majority of seats in the classroom. Educational strategies that once failed a few learners now miss the mark in greater proportions. While the idea of adjusting educational programs to meet a variety of needs seems a daunting task, proponents of culturally relevant pedagogy tend to agree that what works for cultural and linguistic students is "just good teaching." (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Delpit, 1995; Shujaa, 1995). The basic component of good instruction is affirmation of difference and student assisted creation of common language of schooling.

Common ground. Naturally, each Northwest community has its unique linguistic and cultural mix. The first step in creating an equitable common language of schooling is acknowledgment that difference does not equal deficit. While learning standard English and other mainstream skills are vital to the success of all students, the path that students take to achieve proficiencies can be negotiable (Delpit, 1995, Banks & Banks, 1995).

Funds of knowledge. Rather than a hindrance, differences can be an asset in the learning environment. The notion of "funds of knowledge" maintains that children with varying backgrounds bring a wealth of life experiences to learning situations that can be used to facilitate the acquisition of basic and higher level proficiencies (Moll, et al 1992, Lee 1992, McCollom & Walker 1992). Cognitive theorists agree that the act of sorting out the multiple possibilities of a diverse linguistic, social, and intellectual environment invokes higher cognitive function (Bruner, 1989). In welcoming a diversity of experience to the classroom, teachers may capitalize upon a richness of learning opportunities that are part of life in multilingual and multiethnic communities.

Linking Community to the Classroom

Recognition of diversity requires a certain unraveling of traditional models where teachers are expected to know all and to impart this knowledge to a clientele that is ready and willing to learn. Teachers alone cannot anticipate educational needs of all learners. As discussed in the Policy section of this paper, tapping into Funds of Knowledge requires the implementation of such strategies as community inclusion, professional training and curriculum expansion.

Quality of Life and Learning – A Safe and Productive Learning Environment

With growth, the Northwest experiences the social complexities of increased population density. Often viewed as an urban issue, violence has become a growing presence in Northwest communities and schools. While media coverage may offer an exaggerated view, or engender unrealistic fears, the reality is that today's children experience stresses that their parents may not have imagined.

Violence, traumatic stress, and schools. Learning does not take place in a vacuum. There is a large body of research indicating that in terms of cognitive development, the context of learning is as important as content. The quality and kind of social interactions which children experience ultimately determine the learning experience (L.S. Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Wilson, 1995). Educators must work to ensure that violence and other societal stresses do not overtake the learning environment and create learning contexts which are fraught with anxiety and stress (Wilson, 1995).

The messages of fear and mistrust pervade in modern life, and they make their way into the classroom. Incidents of racism, gender bias and other psychological incursions hinder communication and learning by eroding students' well-being and sense of inclusion in the social life of the school and society. It behooves educators to create a physically and psychologically safe environments for learning.

Cultivating civil relationships through school and community. Northwest curriculum specialists promote "the creation of humane and just relationships in the classroom" as an instructional goal (Banks & Banks, 1995). Framers of *America 2000* would seem to support the view that the development of civil process is an important educational goal (Swanson, 1991). Indeed, many educators have come to believe that lessons in civility and other "non academic outcomes" are the domain of not only schools but larger networks of school-home-community (Neil, 1996).

21st Century Learners

As the economic and demographic bases are transformed, the needs of learners will change. New career opportunities will require new types of training. From the business world, educators have adopted the term stakeholder to describe all parties that hold a vested interest in the education of youth. The term implies a contract between a community and its children. In the stakeholder arrangement, many parties acknowledge their responsibility for preparing the new generations for work and life in the future. Given shrinking financial support for public schools, educational institutions are compelled to identify stakeholders and to enlist their expertise and support.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

In observing the currents of urbanization in the Northwest, it is possible to anticipate future trends. Increasing diversity will impact schooling for all children. Social and technological change will necessitate ongoing redefinition of literacy and learning. Educational policy for the Northwest's high growth areas must be informed by the conditions of diversity, a changing social environment, and the literacy demands of the twenty first century.

Capitalizing On Diversity

Changes in the population of learners necessitates reassessment of the needs of Northwest learners. A new generation of learners will bring a greater variety of experience to the classroom. Successful schools will be those that capitalize on a rich cultural and linguistic base by welcoming diverse learning structures to the classroom. Tapping into community knowledge requires the strengthening of school-community ties and strengthening schools' abilities to communicate with learners.

Fostering community and parent involvement. Visioning is the term used by one rapidly growing edge community district to describe a process of community involved school reform. At the behest of the superintendent, parents and community organizations are invited to join in the school's visioning process. School improvement programs which actively recruit a cross section of parents, business and other community members are believed to be especially effective for language minority communities (Cummins 1986; Delgado Gaitán 1990; Goldenberg & Galimore 1990; Gay 1992).

Community links. Strengthened relationships can be established through school-community liaisons. School districts may employ liaisons to perform community outreach duties. cultural envoys, liaisons enlist the confidence of parent, business and other service interests. Bilingual, bicultural or otherwise skilled, the liaison may provide two-way communication between the educational institution and the community, thus clarifying needs and expectations and strengthening the social contract between both parties.

Teacher and paraprofessional training. Teacher and paraprofessional training programs must take into account the changing Northwest classroom. School districts and institutions of higher learning must support the development of programs that ensure a cadre of teachers trained to communicate with diverse learners. Some Northwest Universities have recognized the responsibility to not only recruit teacher candidates of different backgrounds, but to train teachers to enhance learning by bringing home culture to the classroom. Heritage College in Washington has created one such program which trains Spanish speaking professionals as teachers (Fleagle 1996). In Spokane, bilingual paraprofessionals are brought into the schools as teacher aides. In these examples, educational institutions enlist human resources of the minority community.

The inclusive classroom. Current literature maintains that because cultural deficit theory is seriously flawed, pull-out and remediation strategies are not effective solutions to differential achievement among minority students. The maintenance of high standards for all children, coupled with vigorous efforts to train and sustain highly skillful teaching staffs, are key to the success of minority and all students in the Northwest's newly diverse schools (Gay 1992, Delpit 1995, Ladson-Billings 1995).

The tools of teaching—materials and curriculums. Though specialized teaching materials for diverse learners are helpful, they are just a part of larger solutions. The "right" text programs do not ensure equity in the curriculum. Nor should a scarcity of culturally inclusive materials prevent the development of curriculum that is relevant for all students. The work of including diverse voices in classroom discourse is one of method over material; it requires that teachers respect and draw upon the knowledge brought by learners to the classroom (Cummins, 1986; Shujaa, 1995). Hence, the acquisition of language and culturally appropriate materials must be accompanied by curricular strategies that are flexible enough to include the cultural and linguistic voices of the community.

Promoting a Safe and Civil Learning Environment

The creation of a safe and civil learning environment must be encouraged in the home,the school, and the community. Collaboration between educational and service organizations can reinforce and broaden the efforts of educational institutions to build safe and positive learning communities.

Organizational ties. Developing integrated service and intervention networks is essential to creating safe and productive learning environments. Community-based solutions remind students that community and school are inseparable. In Portland, Oregon, Youth Gang Outreach Programs and crisis response units extend antiviolence education in the community. In Sherwood, Oregon, "night court" basketball provides a healthy filler for after school hours. Educational institutions must seek collaboration with law enforcement and other community service organizations to prevent youth crime and victimization. Institutional collaborations help diversify the cost of crime prevention and place schools at the center of larger networks which promote community safety.

Curriculums that promote healthy communication and citizenship are indicated for all schools, whether urban or otherwise. Exemplary antibias, conflict resolution, and equity curriculums are available for educators and should be explored for use at the classroom and institutional levels. These programs generally emphasize student participation in formation of behavioral standards. Though such efforts have a grassroots focus, they must be reinforced and monitored at the district and state levels.

Providing For 21st Century Learners

Learning in the 21st century will take on many new forms. The extent to which policymakers make way for the evolution of new technologies and new literacies may determine the success of educational programs.

Literacy. Literacy, as outlined in such documents as *America 2000* and state benchmarks, is an expanding term. Besides reading, writing, and numeracy skills, literacy for the coming century also includes a set of skills which allow students to become economically self-sufficient and to fully participate in the life of the community. These multiple literacies include communication and citizenship skills that will allow young people to be agents of change as they endeavor to create safe and productive communities. Effective schools reinforce not only academic skills, but the values and standards that allow people to live and work together productively.

Access to 21st century information. Access to 21st century information must be a goal for all schools. In addition to securing computer hardware and information network access, professional training must be a priority. Like new textbooks, computer systems are only as good as the combined mind of instructors and students who use them. With the advances of technological systems, computer literate educators can expose students to an increasingly rich source of knowledge. Northwest educational institutions must capitalize on the presence of high tech industry in the area. School-business partnerships may promote technology literacy and provide for a highly trained workforce of the future.

Differential access. Differential access to the tools of learning and expert training will continue to be an issue as Northwest communities grow. As the economies of entire towns are transformed, the benefits of economic growth will not be enjoyed by all. With the growth of strip mall economies, the Northwest's population of working poor will increase. Policymakers must be mindful of the educational disparities that can occur when growing percentages of students reside in pockets of poverty. Funding must target programs that promote literacy, particularly in the area of computer and information technology for all students across economic and geographic boundaries.

Engaging the full participation of stakeholders. Engaging the full participation of stakeholders allows educational institutions to circumvent social and economic barriers. The Northwest stakeholders must include the small, minority run business and the international firm, the senior center and the neighborhood Head Start. It is not only families with young children who have a vested interest in education; educational institutions may provide leadership by enlisting the participation of business, social

services and other community entities. In partnership with stakeholders, schools gain access to a diversity of resources that are now available in the region.

Forward-Thinking Solutions

The states of the Northwest occupy a position of promise in economic and cultural arenas. As one Northwest superintendent has asserted, the region has reached an opportune moment. With a measure of foresight and much energetic planning, it is possible to witness educational realities of the new millennium and strive to create policy that moves the region forward, setting a standard of excellence for the nation.

Selected Bibliography

Artibise, A., Vernez-Moudon, A. & Seltzer, E. (1996). "Cascadia." In *Cities in our future.* Covelo, CA: Island Press.

Banks, C. M. & Banks, J. "Equity pedagogy: An essential component of mutlicultural education." *Theory into Practice. 34* (3) 152-158.

Barnett L. & Braunger, J. (1996) *Educational needs of the Northwest: 1996 Annual report.* Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

Brice-Heath, S. (1987) "A child resource policy: Moving beyond dependence on school and family." *Phi Delta Kappan, 68*(8) 596-580.

Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds.* Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press.

Caudell, Lee S. (1996) "Life studies: Learning beyond the chain-link fence" *NW Education. 1* (2) 10-15.

Council of Greater City Schools (1990) *Results 2000: Progress in meeting urban education goals.* Washington D.C.: The Council of Greater City Schools.

Cummins, J. (1986) . Empowerment of Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention. *Harvard Educational Revue,* 56 (1) 18-35.

Delgado Gaitán, C. (1990) *Literacy for empowerment: The role of parents in children's education.* N.Y. Falmer Press.

Delpit. L. (1995) *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom.* N.Y: The New Press.

Dyson, M. E. (1996) *Race rules: navigating the color line.* Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley.

Estrada, L. (1993) "The dynamic demographic mosaic called America: Implications for education." *Education and Urban Society. 25* (3) 321-245.

Fleagle, M. (1996) "Growing teachers: A Washington college builds a bilingual teaching force." *Northwest Education, 1* (1) , 29-30

Gay, G. "Building cultural bridges: A bold proposal for teacher education." *Education and Urban Society 25* (3) 285-299.

Goldenberg, C. & Gallimore, R. (1991). "Local knowledge, research knowledge and educational change: A case study of early Spanish reading improvement." *Educational Researcher, 20*(8), 2-14.

Hohensee, J.B. & Derman-Sparks, L. (1996) "Implementing Antibias Curriculum in Early Childhood Classrooms" ERIC Digest # ED351146

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995) "But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy." *Theory Into Practice* 34 (3) 157-165.

Lee, C.D., (1992) "Literacy and cultural diversity in instruction." *Education and Urban Society 24* (2) 279-291

Lewis, C., Schaps, E. & Watson, M.(1996) "The caring classroom's academic edge," *Educational Leadership 54* (1) 16-21.

McCollum P. & Walker L. (1992) "Minorities in America, 2000." *Education and urban Society* 24(2) 178-195.

Moll, L. Amanti, C., Neff, D & González, N.(1992) "Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach for connecting theme to classrooms. *Theory in Practice. 31* (2), 132-41.

Neil, J. (1996) "On emotional intelligence: A conversation with Daniel Goleman." *Educational Leadership. 54*(1).

Swanson. Beverly B. (1991) *An overview of the six national education goals.* ERIC Abstract # ED334714.

U.S. Bank Economics Department. (1996) *U.S. Bank's economic barometer. 34* (1).

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Wilson, A. (1995). "Violence and traumatic stress in American schools" in *Closing the achievement gap: A vision to guide change in beliefs and practices.* The Urban National Network of the Regional Education Laboratories.